

CAME TO GRIEF

Did Mr. Thomas Booterby in His Ambitious Efforts

TO BE A GREAT TENOR

His Discomfiture and Heroic Efforts to Recover Himself A Most Ludicrous Exhibition—Retires and Gives Up Music for a Gents' Furnishing Business and Frowns Upon His Former Companions, Male and Especially Female.

Mr. Thomas Booterby was a young man of six and twenty, and during the passing of these years; his life had been decidedly uneventful. Having been always under the guidance of his mother, a very estimable, but, nevertheless, a very worldly lady, Mr. Thomas's life had passed without a single incident arising to break the monotony of his peaceful existence.

Mr. Thomas was possessed of a short, dumpy figure, a little head inclining to baldness, and a round, boyish face, upon which hair had refused to do duty, although by constant attention and a great deal of solitude, he had managed to congregated a few of these hirsute adornments upon his upper lip in the form of a moustache. Of this he was immensely proud, and spent most of his spare time in viewing the rather slow advancement by means of the glass.

Mr. Thomas Booterby's business was that of a salesman in a large dry goods house, a position he had held since first leaving school. He looked forward to the day when he might, perhaps, embark on the gents' furnishing line on his own account. In this laudable desire he was warmly seconded by his very estimable mother, and many were the long discussions held in the little back parlor of the Booterby home between Thomas and his mother on this very interesting subject. But, alas and alas, the best laid plans are sometimes thwarted by the veriest trifles.

Into the vacant house on the Booterby's right there moved a family of the name of Diggs, who had one grown daughter by the name of Emmerline, and hereby hangs a tale.

Miss Emmerline Diggs was connected with a church choir in the neighborhood, and it was her custom to practice her music every morning and evening, accompanying herself on the piano. Such trills and rills (if you'll excuse the expression) that came forth from the Diggs's home were never before heard in that quiet neighborhood.

There was nothing selfish about the young lady either. Perhaps she thought that such music as she distilled should not be kept miser-like from the public, and so instead of drawing the blinds (as some vocalists humanely do) she would open all the windows and then, sitting down to the piano, in full view of the heartless neighborhood, she would strike a few opening bars, and throwing her fair head back, would assault the evening or the morning air (whichever it chanced to be) in true operatic style.

Persons in the neighborhood made all manner of fun of Miss Emmerline's efforts, especially the female portion did; but this had not the slightest effect upon that young lady's behavior, for as regular as clock work every morning and evening Miss Emmerline could be found distilling sweet music to an unappreciative audience.

Although Miss Emmerline's endeavors were generally ridiculed, she had one ardent admirer in no less a person than Mr. Thomas Booterby.

Though Mr. Thomas had never been formally presented to this interesting young lady, in fact the mere mention of such a probability would have served to put that little gentleman's heart in a state of palpitation. He had seen her, nay, he had heard her heavenly voice, and he was enraptured; and never did a lady have a more faithful knight than Miss Emmerline Diggs had in little Mr. Thomas Booterby.

And now a sudden change became apparent in Mr. Thomas. No more were his thoughts upon the gents' furnishing line. This topic which had formed the basis of many a delightful conversation in the little back parlor of the Booterby home now became perfectly distasteful to the little fellow, much to the surprise and consternation of his fond mother. All his thoughts now were upon Miss Emmerline, and vocalism.

He became a subscriber to several musical publications, and read therein how to become a great singer. These directions the little fellow studied carefully, often sitting up late into the night, in his endeavors to master the many complications. There was one song which particularly appealed to Mr. Thomas's humor. This he purchased in sheet music form, it being called, "Love, Look at Thy Adorer." He had managed to learn the words by heart, and, by a good deal of improvising, he had fashioned some sort of an air to it. There was only one objection to that style of music, Mr. Thomas found, and that was sometimes he had a great many words left after he had finished the tune. Another time he would have too much air and not enough of words. These trifling accidents changed the appearance of the song considerably, and were peculiarly disconcerting to Mr. Booterby, for the reason that every time he sang this touching ballad it appeared to be different from the time before. But he reasoned that the words were there, and that was something.

All this time Mr. Thomas practiced in the privacy of his own room, not even letting his mother become aware of his new ambition. Perhaps Mr. Thomas knew his mother's strong points; but we will not anticipate.

Along about this time, Mrs. Booterby and Mrs. Diggs became acquainted; and Mrs. Diggs, becoming sociable, told Mrs. Booterby how proud she ought to feel of Mr. Thomas. Upon this Mrs. Booterby told Mrs. Diggs how proud she should feel, in the possession of such a talented (she had previously designated said daughter as a "plagued" "screacher") daughter, as Miss Emmerline, "butterfly" was.

This fierce, complimentary canonading, soon brought the two ladies on an even more friendly footing. And Mrs. Diggs asking Mrs. Booterby to call, and Mrs. Booterby dying almost for a chance to inspect the Diggs' furniture, then and there called, excusing her appearance, with the plea, that she "wasn't fixed." To which Mrs. Diggs replied "Addlesticks." Mrs. Booterby was presented to all the Diggs, including the fair emulver of her son. During the highly entertaining conversation which followed, Miss Emmerline mentioned the fact to Mrs. Booterby of her

intention to entertain a select few of her friends that night at a little soiree in honor of her natal anniversary. To this, she desired the presence of Mr. Thomas company and begged Mrs. Booterby to be so kind as to give her son Miss Emmerline's compliments and say that she desired his presence at her party that evening.

When Mr. Booterby arrived home that evening, his mamma made him acquainted with Miss Emmerline's desire. To say that the little gentleman was surprised, would be drawing it mild, indeed; his surprise was only exceeded by his delight. How many times he dressed that night will never be known, now his cravat would not suit him, then again it would be his shirt that was all awry, then when he would be all but ready he would imagine that something was wrong in his attire, and he came very near discolating his little neck in the vain endeavors he made to look down his little back. But as all things have an ending so did this elaborate toilet of Mr. Thomas Booterby.

The party was to be held at eight o'clock, and promptly at that hour, Mr. Thomas Booterby found himself upon the doorstep, with his heart in his mouth and his hat in his hand.

In response to his rather timid knock, the door was opened by no less a person than Miss Emmerline Diggs, looking beautiful in a pink creation, trimmed in blue. And such a smile she greeted him with, putting him at his ease immediately. "So glad to see you Mr. Booterby," she lisped, "I was so afraid that you wouldn't attend." Mr. Thomas murmured something about the darkness it gave him to be present, to which Miss Emmerline replied with a warm pressure of the hand, that was more eloquent than any words she could have spoken.

Mr. Thomas was introduced to the guests that were present and to those that came afterward. And a very merry evening they had of it. They played a game called "Clap in, and clap out," which took Mr. Booterby's fancy immediately. This game was played by someone going out into another room, and sending in for someone who was still in the room, when the person who was sent for responded, he or she was kissed by the sender amid a loud clapping of hands by the assembled company.

Mr. Thomas sent in for Miss Emmerline and Miss Emmerline sent in for Mr. Thomas, and Miss Emmerline kissed Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Thomas kissed Miss Emmerline. If Mrs. Booterby could have seen her estimable son at this moment it is pretty certain that his day of merrymaking would have speedily ceased to exist; but fortunately for all parties this good game was happily, unconscious of the osculatory dissipation of her first born.

After the interest in the games had begun to wane, some one suggested that Miss Diggs favor them with a solo; but this lady excused herself with the plea that she wasn't a singer, and to let some one else do the singing.

But to this the company strongly protested; so after much urging, she finally gave in to the wishes of those present and consented to try, providing the company did not make fun of her poor efforts, to which they cried, "The very idea."

So she sang one song, and upon being vigorously applauded, sang another, which was also well received. Then several other ladies sang, as did several of the gentlemen who were present. Mr. Thomas had heard no other voice through all this vocal bombardment but that of his fair ensnarer; and it was of her he was thinking when he was suddenly aroused from his dreaming by the voice of that talented young lady asking him to sing. He, Thomas Booterby, who had never sang but one song in his life; and that in the privacy of his own room, a night, and sometimes under the bed covers to keep his mother from becoming aware of his ambition. He got up before that crowd of people, a great many of them who were accomplished singers themselves, not that he believed that he couldn't sing, for he knew better; but to sing before a crowd of celebrities as he believed they were: the very idea of such an occurrence caused the perspiration to stand out on his forehead in beads.

How he finally came to be at the piano he doesn't understand to this day; but there he was and being urged by Miss Emmerline to sing just one song, and being entreated by Miss Emmerline's most particular friend, Miss Thomas Simms, to sing one song, and being implored by the rest of the company to sing one song, Mr. Booterby at last gave in and started to sing that much desired one.

As it happened Miss Sophia Simms, who was to be the accompanist, did not appear to be acquainted with that touching little ballad, "Love, Look at Thy Adorer," but she "guessed" she could accompany Mr. Booterby by "faking" the accompaniment; so Mr. Thomas, very nervous and extremely excited, began to sing; that is, if certain little ventriloquist like sounds could be called singing; and although he kept bravely on; his little body puffed up like a bantam's, and his cheeks seemingly ready to burst; he hardly felt as if he was doing himself justice, for try as he might, Mr. Thomas felt, to use a vulgar expression, (that his voice was coming out in "chinks.")

Miss Sophia Simms was having troubles of her own also. In the whole course of her musical career she had officiated at the piano in the role of accompanist on a great many occasions, but this was likely to be a red letter day in her musical calendar, for, as she remarked to some of her personal friends afterwards, that in all her career she had never met such a "sky rocket" singer as that Booterby surely was. From this it can be seen that Mr. Booterby couldn't have exactly "shined."

"What a perfect tenor," cried Miss Diggs after Mr. Thomas had finished. "What wonderful high notes he has," said another. "And so much feeling," echoed a third. And so they kept this up until the little fellow really believed that he had acquitted himself nobly, and he immediately began to grow condescending to the rest of the company, to the male portion of it anyway, and when one of these gentlemen (the wit of the evening it chanced to be) chided him upon his saying he could not sing when he was possessed of such a voice, he replied that he never was much for "putting on," he left that, he said, for those who thought they could sing. Upon hearing this modest speech the ladies all cried "Right you are, Mr. Booterby," while the gentlemen laughed uproariously; indeed they found it necessary to go out into the street until their laughing fit was over.

Miss Emmerline declared how nice it would be if Mr. Booterby would become a member of the choir, and what a valuable acquisition he would be to that body. The whole company seemed to be unanimous in this idea and Mr. Thomas condescendingly told them that he would think the matter over. After this the party came to an end, and Mr. Booterby walked home in all conscious dignity of his evening triumph.

The choir, which Mr. Thomas Booterby had now become a member of, held their meetings twice a week, sometimes in the basement of the church, and again at the different members' houses. At all of these rehearsals Mr. Thomas was a regular attendant, and higher and higher rose his opinion of the very remarkable voice which he possessed. He had never as yet attempted what are called solo parts, although he felt himself competent in every way to sustain such parts should he be called upon to do so. He often wondered why he had never been asked to sing a solo, but he attributed it to some secret jealousy. So one night, after the regular rehearsal was over, Miss Sophia Simms, in a spirit of fun, never dreaming for an instant that he would accept her offer, asked Mr. Thomas to sing a solo on the following Sunday, and, to her consternation and to the delight of the other members of the choir, Mr. Thomas then and there accepted.

The Sunday that was to introduce Mr. Booterby to the public as a soloist came in its usual order and found Mr. Thomas in a great state of excitement indeed. But if he had any fears for himself he kept them well concealed from an ever prying public. He had his doubts, though, just the same; but so did others.

Never before did the church seem so packed as it did on this day. Every seat was filled and people were standing in the aisles. Could it have been noised abroad that a great singer was to warble that day, thought Mr. Thomas as he gave a scared look around the place. This thought was the only pleasant one he had experienced that day. Still Mr. Booterby was ill at ease; so was Miss Sophia Simms, the organist.

He was greeted by a bright smile from Miss Emmerline, who pressed his hand and whispered, "Courage."

"Get ready now, Mr. Booterby," said Miss Sophia Simms, who was in a trembling condition herself, or, as she explained to a lady friend who was sitting near, that she never was so "frustrated in her life." Perhaps this distressing condition was occasioned by certain memories arising in her mind of Mr. Booterby's former vocal triumphs. Anyway, to use an expression of a lady who was present, "Sophy Simms didn't look nervous." In response to Miss Sophia's command, Mr. Thomas took his position beside the organ with a copy of the music in his trembling hands.

"Are you ready?" whispered Miss Sophia.

"Y-es," faltered Mr. Thomas, nearly panic stricken. "Then here goes," replied that young lady, "and be sure that you come in on time," she added hurriedly, "or you'll spoil the effect." Miss Sophia played the opening prelude with an artistic flourish, and then raised her finger to Mr. Booterby as the signal for him to begin.

That gentleman stood erect beside the organ, despite a curious trembling in his legs and a most unpleasant feeling in the region of his stomach. When Miss Sophia gave the signal to begin, Mr. Thomas straightened himself up, took a long breath, threw his head well back, and there he stood, with his mouth wide open and his eyes staring wildly, but not one sound came from that gentleman, save a little gasping cry, not unlike the sound made by people when they are out of breath from some violent exertion, or perhaps his condition was more aptly described by one of the lady members of the choir by the following terse sentence, "Like a fish on dry land."

Seeing that Mr. Thomas had missed connections, Miss Sophia played serenely on through the first bars, whispering to Mr. Thomas to be ready to come in on the second verse.

By the time that Miss Sophia had come to the second verse Mr. Booterby had recovered his scattered wits somewhat, and he determined to do or die, so when he was given the second signal he bravely started off. But try as he might, and though he strained every nerve in his little body, his voice could scarcely be heard above the organ, and then only in little gasps. Another peculiar feature of Mr. Thomas's performance was the very peculiar behavior of his voice. At one time this remarkable organ would ring out in a shrill falsetto, then just as suddenly would it change to a basso-profundo, for no apparent reason at all. From this it would touch lightly all along the line at the different registers, and then die away into a shrieking soprano, without informing Mr. Thomas previously as to its intention, thereby leaving that little gentleman as so aptly described by the before mentioned lady "like a fish on dry land."

The members of the choir began to smile and nudge one another, some found it difficult to restrain their mirth and laughed outright. The congregation began to glance up at the choir with smiling faces as they became aware of something unusual happening there. All this Mr. Thomas Booterby, who was dignity itself, saw, aye, and felt, but he fully tried to save that last lingering shred of his former reputation which he knew was stealing away from him, while the whole congregation was convulsed with laughter.

Sing out," whispered Miss Emmerline, from behind him. "Get up more steam, Booterby," said the big bass, who appeared to be doubled up with merriment. "Louder, louder," urged the rest of the choir. And although he made a gallant effort, in response to the cheering, he made a dismal failure, his voice dying away into a long, lingering shriek, kept up even after the organ had stopped, but there was no earthly way for Mr. Thomas to control such a voice as that; so there he stood, with the perspiration streaming from his face in little rivers, the choir, in perfect ecstasies of enjoyment of the situation and the congregation, fast becoming hysterical. But for the very good reason that he was unable to let it go.

What would he not have given to have been able to strangle that offensive note in its infancy? But there was one consoling thought that floated through his mind at this execrable moment, and that was, if ever he was able to shut his mouth again, it should never, never, never be opened in song again, not if he finally became a rival of Messinger.

How he managed to make his way home afterwards through a laughing, gaping crowd will, perhaps, always remain a mystery to him. But his first action upon his reaching home was to go immediately to his room, and there, gathering all his once precious musical effects together, he carried them solemnly down to the kitchen range, and there consigning them to the raging flames, with a fendish expression on his usually serene little countenance.

This all occurred some time ago, and since then he has embarked in the gents' furnishing business, much to the delight of his mother, and to the satisfaction of himself. His dignity has increased wonderfully also, and when he meets either Miss Sophia Simms or Miss Emmerline Diggs—it makes

no difference now which, as all women look alike to him—he politely raises his hat and passes them by with a cutting glance. And all dates of occurrences in the choir are reckoned from the time before or the time after Booterby "went up in the air."

REVERE RODGERS.

THE CENSUS CLERKS

And the Merit System as Practiced in Washington.

WASHINGTON, D. C., February, 1902. Editor Sunday Globe:

In a recent issue of the *Star* one signing as Justitia makes some very pointed statements in regard to the determining the Civil Service and the merit system. In answer to his or her statements would give the following: Why is it that the prospect of a number of Census Office clerks, largely appointed from all parts of the country, are bringing about such a controversy? Why was there not an equal amount of electioneering and press stump speaking when the move was made to appoint over one-half thousand Washingtonians on the temporary (?) clerk racket at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War? Again, why was nothing said when this stolen horde (largely made up of families of influence) attempted the permanency racket, or blanket move, and were howling, through the columns of the *Star*, for Root and Roosevelt to make them life-fixtures? See January numbers of the *SUNDAY GLOBE* and you will find that this question, both sides, has been thoroughly fought to a finish and the ground covered as none of the city papers cared or dared to. When an outside influx of tried and examined clerks makes the attempt to obtain a share of Washington department patronage—well there is a war on hand and the merit system is about to be irretrievably ruined for all time. Remember, there are persons right here who are well posted as to the competitive examination route, and who also know that a large number of District favorites, largely female, get their feet into the so-called classified service without ever going near, much less going through, any such long-range entrance route.

The Civil Service is compared to a boat liable to be sunk by overcrowding. Very good. It has appeared to observing persons for the several years past, however, as an almighty leaky, waterlogged scow with no rudder; in fact, more sunk than afloat, and just a sort of impediment to navigation either way, i. e., merit system or no system at all. There have been leaks and leaks innumerable, and entirely too large to be patched. First come the clerical aristocrats, one of his daughters quarreled in one of the city departments, and then some department pa would get his Willie on the Government pay roll; then again the first mentioned would get another daughter in, and then himself in, and then some other relative in, and thus things have been going on and families have been going in. And it looked as if this state of affairs was to be for ever and ever, until the GLOBE came to town, then what cat-calls and squalls there were starting wildly. The editor was going to get hurt, and the correspondents were going to be locked up; and Pa this one felt his family were not treated with due consideration in their departmental mention; and Miss smuch and such was so highly exasperated at that horrid paper, etc., *ad nauseum*. To sum up the entire fracas, there should have been kicking long ago, and plenty of it. Please remember that others besides yourself have vent through the honest mill of competition, both clerical and auxiliary, and have been certified several times by the Commission only to find that some pimp who stood in with the appointing power got the position, even though lower in rating. Please remember that you are not the only bird, nor are you likely to be the last. Census clerks or not, you have about as much show as ever. This twaddle about the merit system is well in its way, but the principle is powerfully magnified; its principles have been continually violated and consequently slandered, and in the opinion of all observers, will continue thus to be an official fence.

There are ewe lambs (birds, female birds of prey) would be a more fitting expression) and black sheep and sheep of all colors, and many of them. And there will be fool moves by short-sighted Congressmen tending to put out of office honest, hard-working old men, and deserving old women, for to enlarge a few spaces. Yes, indeed, new space for a few Civil Service eligibles and many pets of both sexes who are not eligible at all; just families of "floods" that's all.

Those Census Office clerks, of both sexes, are undoubtedly hindered as to permanent transfer by their numbers. Taken individually though those from away were originally appointed in a manner entirely foreign to the methods usually pursued in this Capital City in the way of working in those desired to be put in, especially in regard to home talent.

In regard to the Civil Service Commission in times past would say this: It always appeared to those on the outside of the departments as an unenforced nonentity with no say contradictory to those interests directly involved by heads of departments. When it pleased certain departments to work the discharge ticket—sell the nation's defenders and others deserving were first on a wholesale scale, and it mattered not if they had competitive clerical ratings 94.70, and were battle-scarred veterans with military records to correspond. They were just not wanted; had no work for them, but plenty for showy young females and fair paper-collared dudes, yes for entire families of them. Oh, Lord, what a stretch, to use the expression of one of those brazen office women who happened to hear certain favoritism-splitting remarks addressed to a worldly fellow Amazon of her immediate favorite clique. True, every bit of it, and the truth only partly told at that.

The Civil Service Commission should have taken steps to enforce its laws before this, and should have noticed the continual drive of violation that has been going on for several years past.

Certain pacies have, of late, been giving kicks through the *Star*, but they seem like a few buckets of water thrown in a half-hearted way after a fire has been burning a mighty long time.

Parties who wanted to turn entire batteries on the lines have long ago turned their attention to stronger papers who were already engaged upon the work. P. T. Q.

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